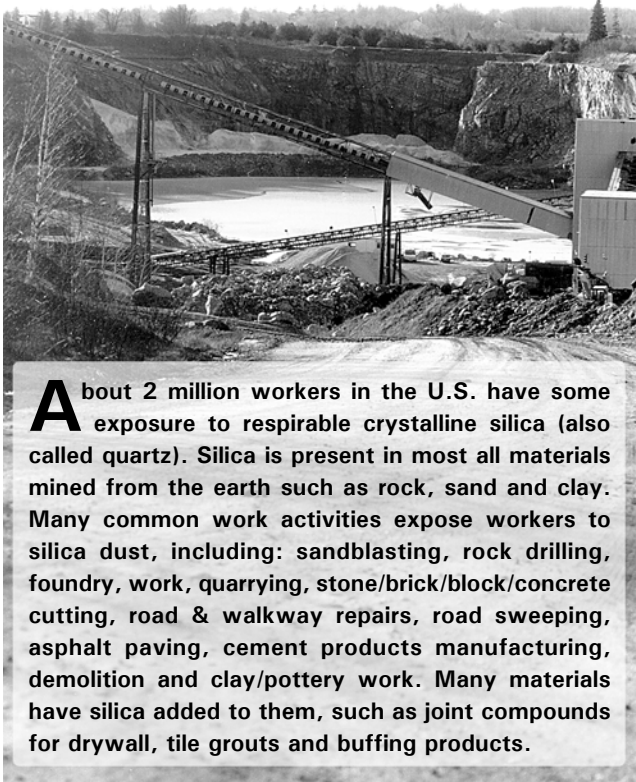


Protect Workers from Silica Dust

by Taras Dijak



About 2 million workers in the U.S. have some exposure to respirable crystalline silica (also called quartz). Silica is present in most all materials mined from the earth such as rock, sand and clay. Many common work activities expose workers to silica dust, including: sandblasting, rock drilling, foundry work, quarrying, stone/brick/block/concrete cutting, road & walkway repairs, road sweeping, asphalt paving, cement products manufacturing, demolition and clay/pottery work. Many materials have silica added to them, such as joint compounds for drywall, tile grouts and buffing products.

Photo credit: Bob Lane

Silica is not just dust—it has serious health effects. Breathing silica causes silicosis—an often-fatal hardening of the lungs due to scar tissue formed around inhaled silica. Silica is now listed as a human carcinogen. It is also associated with lung cancer and an increased risk of tuberculosis. Silica may contribute to bronchitis, emphysema, asthma, stomach cancer, heart, kidney and liver disease, and rheumatoid arthritis, according to reports by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

The current OSHA permissible exposure limit (PEL) for crystalline silica may not protect workers from disease. OSHA is trying to update the PEL, but that could take years. In the meantime, it's important to protect people who work with this highly toxic material.

Here's what to do:

1. DO NOT use materials containing more than 0.1% crystalline silica.
2. Use local exhaust ventilation, enclosures, and high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtering vacuums for cleaning.
3. Use wet cutting. Do not dry sweep or blow with compressed air.
4. Avoid smoking, eating or drinking in dusty environments.
5. Provide showers, washrooms and change rooms to keep dusts from contaminating workers' vehicles and homes.
6. Use personal protective equipment (PPE) such as respirators and disposable coveralls.
7. Develop a management plan that includes periodic air monitoring, employee training, Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS's), medical examinations and warning signs in areas of high dust exposure.

For information, training and air monitoring for silica, call SafetyWorks! at 1-877-SAFE-345. The OSHA web page, www.osha.gov, also has information on silica.

Taras Dijak is a SafetyWorks! Occupational Health Specialist

Another Change to Recordkeeping

Beginning Jan. 1, 2004, employers must use OSHA's revised Form 300 (Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses). The revised form includes various changes, including

- A new column for occupational hearing loss (*new column M5*);
- More clear-cut formulas for calculating incidence rates; and
- Columns K and L are switched on the new form: column K will be the count of calendar days away from work and column L will be the count of calendar days of job transfer or restriction.

And, remember-while there is no separate column for work-related injuries associated with ergonomic factors, employers must still record those injuries in either the injury or "all other illness" columns **if the case is OSHA recordable**. (Hint: Don't over-record, make sure the case is recordable.)

You can get the new forms at <http://www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/RKforms.html> or from SafetyWorks! SafetyWorks! can also answer your questions about recordkeeping.

Start the New Year with a SafetyWorks! Class

The Schedule of SafetyWorks! Classes will be in the mail by the end of the year. Classes start in February. You can find the schedule on the web in mid-December. www.Maine.gov/labor/blsmain.htm

New Group Studies Data and Prevention

The Occupational Safety and Health Data Collection and Injury Prevention (OSHDCIP) Work Group was recently convened by the Department of Labor as directed by the legislature. The group will identify ways to improve injury and illness data and prevention efforts. For more information, go to: <http://www.Maine.gov/labor/bls/Datagroup.html>

New Labor Posters Available Free

Employers must display certain posters where employees can see them. The posters for child labor, minimum wage, regulation of employment and whistleblower protection have been updated and redesigned. For copies of the new posters or a list of all required posters call 624-6400 or go to www.Maine.gov/labor/blsmain.htm

Commission Honors Excellence

Each year the Commission on Safety and Health in the Maine Workplace recognizes safety and health excellence with awards presented at the Maine Safety and Health Conference. This year Al Kirk of the University of Southern Maine received the Safety Education Award. The Special Recognition Award went to the Houlton Branch of Louisiana-Pacific Corporation.



Al Kirk accepts Safety Education Award

Photo credit: Lynne Lamstein

Gerry Nason accepts Special Achievement Award on behalf of Louisiana-Pacific Corporation.



Photo credit: Lynne Lamstein

Safety Education Award

This award is given to a group, organization, educational institution or individual who has shown significant leadership in the area of safety education, especially for the young workers and future workers of Maine.

Special Recognition Award

This award is for a group or organization that has demonstrated significant achievements in the area of workplace safety and health in the past year.

Visit our web site at <http://www.Maine.gov/labor/blsmain.htm>

M A I N E

NETS

Network Of Employers
For Traffic Safety



Curb Your Aggressions

Aggressive driving is a combination of unsafe and unlawful driving actions that show a disregard for safety, including:

- Speeding: exceeding the posted limit or driving too fast for conditions;
- Improper or excessive lane changing: failing to signal intent, failing to look to see whether movement can be made safely; and
- Improper passing: failing to signal intent, using an emergency lane to pass, or passing on the shoulder.

While the exact number is not known, aggressive driving is believed to contribute to a large number of the 6,335,000 crashes in the U.S. each year. Aggressive drivers create an unsafe driving environment, often committing multiple driving violations that put others at risk.

Congested roadways and tight schedules contribute to aggressive driving. As the number of vehicles on the road increases so does congestion. This often leads to frustration and an aggressive, high-risk driving style. A busy schedule with deadlines to meet adds to the likelihood of dangerous driving.

Aggressive drivers create an unsafe driving environment, an increasing problem in Maine. Employers can help curb this problem. They can put policies in place regarding speeding, violations, and crashes that result from aggressive driving. They can also allow drivers to change their schedules to times of less congestion. And they can help employees understand that aggressive driving endangers everyone, including their co-workers, friends, and family.

The leading cause of workplace fatality is traffic crashes, yet many employers do not address this issue in their safety and health programs.

The Maine Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) provides information, training and resources to employers in an effort to reduce traffic incidences affecting employees that may result in property damage, injury or death.

For more information about the Maine NETS Program, contact Michele Grant, Maine NETS Coordinator at (207) 624-6400 or at Michele.grant@maine.gov.

Hiring Young Holiday Workers?

Do you know that teens under 18 cannot work alone in a cash-based business? If you're hiring teenagers to work for you over the holidays, don't forget the Child Labor Laws, which detail when and where teens can work and what they can do. For more information on Maine child labor laws, go to www.Maine.gov/labor/bls/wagehour.htm or www.safeteen.org

Information in the articles is not a substitute for official policy or regulations. The editor is Lynne Lamstein, director of outreach and education for the Bureau of Labor Standards.

Tel: 207-624-6400, TTY (for people who are deaf and hard of hearing): (207) 624-6003, e-mail: webmaster.bl@Maine.gov

The Maine Department of Labor provides equal opportunity employment and programs. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

CSU - Here to Help You

Labor Commissioner Laura Fortman and Assistant to the Commissioner Vanessa Duquette met with the Customer Service Unit (CSU). When you call SafetyWorks!, CSU staff take your requests and make sure you get the services you want.



Photo credit: Bob Pomerleau

From left: Assistant to the Commissioner Vanessa Duquette, CSU Supervisor Rachel Newman, CSU Staffer Sara Powell, Commissioner Laura Fortman, and CSU Staffers Nancy Longfellow and Gail Richards. Missing is CSU Staffer Janet Leblanc.

Visit our web site at <http://www.Maine.gov/labor/blsmain.htm>

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Fall 2003

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Bill Peabody Named Bureau Director

In my 30 years with the Bureau of Labor Standards, workplace safety and health has always been a top priority. As deputy director since 1990, I have seen our safety and health services develop to meet the changing world of work. The SafetyWorks! program exemplifies our commitment to making Maine workplaces better places to work.



I am pleased to have this opportunity to lead the Bureau as we develop new partnerships and initiatives to improve workplace safety and health.

William A. Peabody, Director
Bureau of Labor Standards

Bill Peabody is a familiar face at the Bureau of Labor Standards—he's been with the bureau since 1973 and has been deputy director since 1990. As director, Bill will oversee 54 employees, a budget of over \$4 million, and diverse programs, including SafetyWorks!